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THE
MENTOR
BALZAC

By
VANCE THOMPSON

DEPARTMENT OF
LITERATURE

VOLUME 7
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THE HUMAN COMEDY



BALZAC'S novels are full of strange problems and great passions. He turned aside from nothing which presented itself in nature; and his mind was always turbulent with the magnificent contrasts and caprices of fate. To say that the situations which he chose are often romantic is but to say that he followed the soul and the senses faithfully on their strangest errands. Our probable novelists of today are afraid of whatever emotion might be misinterpreted in a gentleman. Believing, as we do now, in nerves and a fatalistic heredity, we have left but little room for the dignity and disturbance of violent emotion. To Balzac humanity had not changed since the days when *Œdipus* was blind and *Philoctetes* cried in the cave; and equally great miseries were still possible to mortals, though they were French and of the nineteenth century.

And thus he created, like the poets, a humanity more logical than average life; more typical, more subdivided among the passions, and having in its veins an energy almost more than human. He realized, as the Greeks did, that human life is made up of elemental passions and necessity; but he was the first to realize that, in the modern world, the pseudonym of necessity is money. Money and the passions rule the world of his "Human Comedy."

ARTHUR SYMONS.

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HONORÉ DE BALZAC

By VANCE THOMPSON

MENTOR
GRAVURES



PORTRAIT OF BALZAC



HONORÉ DE BALZAC



HOUSE OF EUGÉNIE

GRANDET



MENTOR
GRAVURES



STATUE OF BALZAC



"HOTEL OF THE
MOOR"



THE OLD INN,

ISSOUDUN

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

From a daguerreotype by Nadar, made in 1842. This is the only known portrait of Balzac in which there is no attempt at characterization or pose. It was given by Balzac to his sister and a few friends



It is true, as Henry James wrote, that of Balzac, "the last word can never be said." The world will go on talking about Balzac, just as it goes on talking about Cervantes, but never again will it question his right to a place in world-literature. Out of the jealousies, clouds, angers of the century, the great man has emerged and claimed his own. If you want to look at a thing like a mountain you have to stand at a distance. And as we get farther away from Balzac, in time, we are, in reality, getting closer to the man and to his work.

Were there no more to a man than the body he walks about in, it would be easy to portray Honoré de Balzac. One might picture him, at twenty-one, in his garret in the Rue Lesdiguières (lay-dee-gee-air) in Paris, half-starved, working day and night in his vehement way, at dreadful "pot-boilers"—long ago forgotten. He is sitting by the window, writing. The boyish figure is small, but well-shaped. The face bent over the paper is chubby—with its short, wide nose, plump cheeks and rounded chin. There is more character in the mouth; it is full-lipped, whim-

sical, humorous, and the teeth show white and strong. The hair is short, thick and curly. Extraordinary eyes of a strange chestnut color stare out of the young face. As you look in upon him, there in his dingy garret under the roof, he has paused in his day's work and is writing to his sister; what he writes is this: "Laure, Laure, my only two wishes (and how immense they are!) *to be famous and to be loved*—will they ever be fulfilled!"

The years went by and brought him fame, and from the far edge of Russia a woman came bringing him love, but he was an old man, then, near the grave. He had worked at his task as no man ever worked with a pen—not even Sir Walter Scott. "I go to bed at six or seven in the evening; I wake up at one in the morning and work until eight; then I take something light and a cup of coffee and get into the shafts of my cab until four, then I take a bath and go for a walk or go to bed. . . . It is in vain I work my fourteen hours a day; I cannot do enough." And what had work and the years made of the chubby youth you saw in his garret? Perhaps you know Rodin's monstrous, truth-telling statue of Balzac. At all events, you may picture to yourself the great man—dressed in his robe of a White Friar, drinking black coffee at midnight and writing, writing, writing. . . .

He had grown stout; he was a squat, obese man, with thick neck,

double chins, a huge abdomen. His hair, now, was thin and he wore it long and unkempt. The humorous mouth was half-hid under the brush of a ragged mustache. Withal his manners were abrupt; at times, when he was in company, he glowered or broke out, suddenly, into roars of laughter. And so you may see him—loved now and famous—posing, perhaps, in Madame de Girardin's drawing-room, a fat and noisy and *bourgeois*-looking man in careless, ill-fitting clothes. The body that was given to him to walk the world in was gross and unshapely and ridiculous. Fortunately, a man of genius saw him with clairvoyant eyes and wrote down what he saw. Lamartine came late one night to Madame de Girardin's *salon*. Balzac was standing by the fireplace, talking. At first, Lamartine saw merely a short, fat, stodgy lump of a



FRANÇOIS BALZAC
Father of Honoré



BALZAC'S BIRTHPLACE
Rue Royale, Tours, France

The house in which the great novelist first saw the light is the one in the center, with the awnings



MADAME BALZAC
Mother of Honoré

man; and then "the brightness of his face and the mobility of his figure made it impossible to reckon his height, for it wavered with his thought; *there seemed to be a gap between him and the ground*; now he would stoop down to earth as though to gather a sheaf of ideas—then he would draw himself up on tiptoe, as though to follow the flight of his thought towards infinity."

And the coarse, obese body on its thick legs?

Lamartine ceased to see it—"there was so much soul in it all, that it was borne lightly and joyously like a supple envelope." . . .

And that was the real Balzac. There was a gap between him and the ground. In literature (and I make this statement quietly, without emphasis and without declamation) there has been no

such master-magician since Shakespeare. Balzac created a world, and if it did not reach the height of Shakespeare's world, it was infinitely more varied and touched more closely the common things of common men—of whom God has made millions. Think a moment: there are over two thousand characters in his books; and they are not mere names—each is individual, distinct, a living human being, whose life you may trace from life to death, knowing all the essential facts, labors, loves, sins, heroisms, and meeting kith and kin and friends. They are in life as we are in life. To read Balzac is like visiting a city, a country, a world. And to us, who are Balzacs, the people of the "*Comédie Humaine*"* are as real as the men we talk with in the club or the women we take out to dinner. The master-magician touched them and they lived. Indeed, to Balzac himself they were more real than the people of his everyday life. Once his secretary, Jules Sandeau, came late by reason of a sister's illness; for awhile Balzac listened patiently to an account of Mademoiselle Sandeau's symptoms; then he said: "Yes, yes, it's too bad! But let's get back to reality—who shall Eugénie Grandet marry?" The heroine of his book was more real to him than the little woman in the next street. And when Balzac



BALZAC AT THE AGE OF
TWENTY-FIVE

From a painting attributed to
Achille Deveria



BALZAC'S BELOVED SISTER,

LAURE
Afterwards
Madame Surville

* The name by which Balzac's great group of novels is known.

lay dying in his bed, he whispered: "Fetch Bianchon (bee-ahn-shong) — no one but Bianchon can pull me through." Now Dr. Bianchon is the famous physician who passes, like a good providence, through the "*Comédie Humaine*," and to his creator he was more real than the physician who bent over his bed. It was this victorious belief in the reality of his own creations that made of Balzac the greatest novelist the world has known.

A little of this intensive imagination he applied to his own life. You may remember the house he took at Ville d'Avray (veel dahvray) — an empty house, with bare walls. On the plaster, scarcely dry, were inscriptions of what was to be—thus he furnished the house in imagination and regardless of expense. On the north wall of the salon, he wrote: "Here is a superb piece of Flemish tapestry of the thirteenth century," and for him the tapestry was there. Priceless pictures by Raphael, Titian, Rembrandt, Louis XV furniture upholstered in Aubusson tapestry—he evoked them all on floor or wall. Over the empty hearth he wrote, with black crayon: "This malachite mantelpiece was a gift of the Tzar of Russia"—only, as Nora in the "Doll's House" might have said: "There wasn't any mantelpiece." On the ceiling he marked out a place for a Venetian chandelier. Then, quite content with his dream-furniture, Balzac sat down at a little wooden table in the naked room—and wrote masterpieces.

And here, I think, you touch the secret of Balzac's supreme power.

He had vision. He had what Carlyle called "the seeing eye." Once in the street he saw a poor man and a poor woman, going their way; he followed, at a distance, for—

"I could make their lives mine, I felt their rags on my back, I walked with my feet in their gaping shoes; their cravings and their needs—everything passed into my soul, and my soul passed into theirs."

In these words Balzac has fully revealed his secret; on the one hand, you have the "seeing eye," which discerned the rags and broken shoes, and, on the other hand, you have the passionate human love, which made all men but parts and fragments of



BALZAC

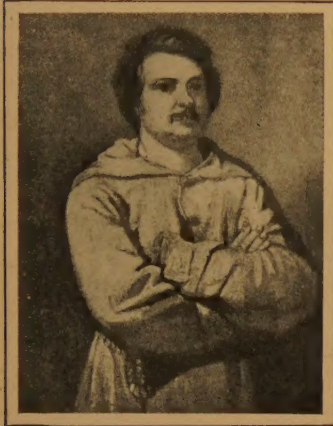
From a lithograph by Julien, made in 1840



THE TOWER AT TOURS

In which Balzac passed most of his time when at college

himself. That was Balzac. He saw the petty, external details of life with almost microscopic vision. Take anyone of his characters,—the slightest that idles for a moment on the page,—and it is pictured with photographic reality, so that you know the eyes, the hair, the clothes, the walk, the little tricks of gesture, the scar on the throat; but these little facts detained Balzac but a moment and he passed, as it were, through



From a drawing by Charles Huard
Courtesy of the Century Company

PORTRAIT OF BALZAC
By Boulanger

them and beyond them to the essential life the man with the scarred throat was living—to his motives and his passions and his dreams. Thus, he knew the man and, knowing him, loved him.

And here I come, by natural sequence, to the most important thing I have to say of Balzac—since “the last word can never be said.” Balzac looked at men and women; and all their cravings and all their needs passed into his soul. He knew their ambitions, loves, sins, obscure desires, crimes, virtues. And having known these things, he wrote them down, without anger, without surprise, without shame. More than that: he did not write of these sinners—of our dark humanity—with the air of one who pardons them or pities them. There was none of that assumption of

superiority that annoys readers of Thackeray, who was always (unconsciously) contrasting his own rectitude and gentility with the shocking wickedness and vulgarity of his characters. Balzac was as impersonal as sunlight. For him Vautrin, the convict, was not a villain to be shuddered at; Lucien de Rubempré was not a rake to be scolded; for Balzac’s soul passed into theirs—and he could think of them in terms of love. This, I think, you must bear always in mind, as you read your Balzac. He did not apologize for his men and women; he did not criticize them; he did not, in a word, describe them from without—he entered into them and, there, at the very center and core of life he stood and made public confession. Among the thousands of men and women he created you find rogues and wastrels—shameful folk; you are in a world of mean motives, treacheries, selfishness, cruelty, greed, folly, crime; and you say to yourself: “Dear Lord, is life so base?” And Balzac



THE BRITTANY MILL

Often passed by Balzac during his walks between Ernée and Fougères, and described by him at the beginning of his first great novel, “*Les Chouans*”



From a drawing by Charles Huard
Courtesy of the Century Company

THE PLACE DE LA PETITE NARETTE, -
ISSOUDUN

Scene of the principal events in Balzac's story,
"Un Ménage de Garçon"

at other times they rise to white heights of heroism and sacrifice. It is true, Balzac was afraid of nothing; he touched the deepest things in life as well as the highest—mud and star; and being human, so do you. And so you must think of Balzac as one who saw all things—what was good in humanity and what was evil—and said them. How he saw them I need not tell you; it was with a sense of livingness—a realism—such as the world, till then, had never known. He was not all eyes and intellect; there was heart, too—a huge, passionate heart wide enough to take in good and bad alike.

The chief external facts of Balzac's life may be stated in few words. His real biography is in his books and in his letters. His school days are pic-



PORTRAIT SKETCH

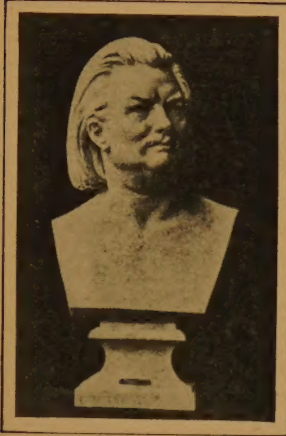
By Pierre David, the French sculptor. The inscription reads: "To Madame de Surville, a sketch made of her illustrious brother by David, 1843"

would answer you: "Yes—in the Confessional." And you should remember, too, that in this confessional, where his soul passed into other souls, Balzac knew not only Cousin Bette and Valérie Marneffe, but, as well, Ursule Mirouet (meer-oo-ay) — the purest and winsomest maiden in all fiction—and the mystic Seraphita, and hundreds of true, brave men and honest women. Balzac did not paint the dark side of life—he painted life; and if his books are full of shadows it is because, being human, men and women fall at times, even as



CAST OF BALZAC'S
HAND

tured in "*Le Lys dans la Vallée*" (Lily of the Valley) and in that amazing, haunting book, "Louis Lambert"; his years of struggle and privation in Paris are recorded, with frightful realism, in "Albert Savarus" and in "*Le Peau de Chagrin*" (Magic Skin). And so of all his life-journey; the story of his love for women—the duchess he knew and the alien countess he married—is in his books; and there, too, you may read the story of his strange, religious exaltations, the mystic adventures and the stormy pilgrimages of the soul. The hard and shallow materialism of the last generation turned away, indifferently, from his idealism. It saw in his philosophy of life merely a sort of moral and intellectual cloudiness and in his affirmation



BUST OF BALZAC

By Margaret de Vasselot. In the national theater of France, the *Théâtre-Français*, Paris

of human immortality "the folly of his day." Back in the last century Henry James said top-loftically: "'Louis Lambert' is now quite unreadable." A more spiritual generation sees in it a work of profound science and high inspiration, if the word be taken in its true sense of breathing-in from a higher source. Balzac studied life with unfailing and pitiless curiosity—life, as it was, strong and cunning, human, hungry, evolutionary; but overhead he saw the mysterious and eternal stars.

Here are the simple facts of his life-history:

Balzac was born in Tours (toor), France, on Saint Honoré's day (May 16th), in 1799. His father was an old, obscure man of the lower-middle-class. His mother should have a biography of her own. She was thirty-two years younger than her husband, a tall, thin, handsome woman, masterful and intelligent; withal she was a mystic, given to curious occult studies, which were not without influence on her son. Balzac had two sisters and a younger brother, who perished obscurely in America. At nine years of age he was sent to the College of Vendôme, where he remained for five years. He read enormously in the great library of the Oratorians, pursuing studies far in advance of his years. Then, in 1814, he entered a school in Tours. He was never an orderly student, but he took up with passionatè intensity the subjects in which his interest lay—history, philosophy, literature. Then to Paris; from seventeen to twenty he led the life of a needy student in the Latin Quarter (for he was bitterly poor), studying law and attending the classes at the Faculty of Letters. At twenty-one he was offered a clerkship in a lawyer's office and a life of undistinguished ease opened before him. He turned his back on it and returned to his garret. He wrote a bad play; he wrote seven bad novels, which miraculously got themselves published. These were the terrible years of his apprenticeship to Literature, and they were darkened by ill-health and desperate poverty. One wild incursion into business he made, setting up a type-foundry, which failed and loaded him with debt—a thing he struggled with all his life. At the height of his career—with "labor galley-slaves would refuse," as he said—his annual income rarely exceeded 12,000 francs (about (\$2,400)).

At last, in 1829, "*Les Chouans*"* appeared. It was his first masterpiece—the first of his thirty

*A *chouan* was a Royalist insurgent during the French Revolution.



STATUE OF BALZAC

By Paul Fournier. Erected to his memory in Tours

immortal books. It brought him fame and, in a strange way, it brought him the love of which he had written, boyishly, to his sister Laure. In the far-away Ukraine there was a young Polish lady, Madame Rzewuska-Hanska, blue-blooded, fabulously rich. She read "*Les Chouans*" (lay shoo-ahng) and began a correspondence with the author. Many years later, only a few months before Balzac died, she became his wife. Of Balzac's life this is all that need be said; for the years were years of merciless and passionate hard work, of travel in Italy, Russia, and the France he loved and knew so well, of debts and duns and duties. His poverty, like that of the great Corneille (core-nail), was incurable! He died as he lived, *soul de gloire et affame d'argent* (surfeited with glory and starved for money).

And being dead, Honoré de Balzac has taken his place in world-literature.

As clearly as possible and in few words I shall try to define his place in the great Pantheon of Letters. To-day the noise and confusion of the commentators have died away and we may see the real Balzac emerge—a grave, eternal figure. Taine could say of him: "After Shakespeare he is our great magazine of human documents." That is a shabby way of putting it. I shall not compare him to Shakespeare, save to say that what Shakespeare did for the chivalrous and tumultuous Elizabethan world, Balzac did for the fierce, tangled years of the Revolution, the Empire, the Restoration. He gave them "long-enduring record." The world through which Homer wandered is as



THE HEAD OF BALZAC

From Rodin's amazing conception of the novelist, which was rejected by a French committee as a memorial to him



"THE GARDENS" (*Les Jardins*)

Ville d'Avray

Balzac lived here from the fall of 1837 to December, 1840

real to us as the streets of our city; Shakespeare's world is imperishable; and Balzac has given to his world the same durable reality. It does not matter much what you think of the "*Comédie Humaine*"; it is a fact—a fact of metal and stone, imperishable. Forty years of human life—the forty years of tumult that followed the French Revolution—the fruitful years of tearing, testing, building! It seems far away from us now, separated by the gulf



THE HOUSE IN PASSY

Occupied by the author for seven years (1840-1847)

of the Great War in Europe, and it is indeed as a definite part of the past as the heroic world of Homer—the social causes that stirred in it are no longer at work. New forces are shaping mankind. Those years, which Balzac made his own, are now a part of Literature—the only form of historic record that is in any way durable. There it is—a record, amazing and complete and alive, of humanity during the forty fierce and greedy years. It is all there—men and nations in an epic interplay; it is all there—tempera-

ment, education, breeding, habits, mannerisms, language, thought, philosophy, science, religion—it is a civilization that passes through the crowded pages. Humanity passes; and Balzac looks upon it all, studies it all—good and ill alike—without anger. That is the important thing to know. In all Balzac's creative work is the quality of moral non-partisanship, which distinguishes the great artist from the great preacher. In his books are criminals monstrous as Iago, but to him, as to Shakespeare, the significant part of the evil-doer was not his villainy, but his humanity. That is why he put everything into his books—tragedy and clanking melodrama and roaring farce; and that is why you see in the world he created men busy with murder and theft and darkling politics, and, in the same street, men sublime by love and sacrifice. His way was the way life has. Wherefore Balzac, like Homer, like Shakespeare, like Cervantes, is a final authority upon human nature. . . .

Reading Balzac

No great writer has been so ill-treated by his biographers and critics as Honoré de Balzac. The English reader knows him chiefly through the inadequate translations, which, in many of the editions, are prefaced by the patronizing essays of Professor George Saintsbury. It was too much the habit in the last century for the critic to take his author as a mirror in which to admire himself. Professor Saintsbury is always ex-



MADAME HANSKA'S CHATEAU

Wiertzkownia, Poland, where Balzac visited in the last years of his life

plaining how badly Balzac built his book and wrote his story and giving intimations of how well it might have been done, until one is ready to weep with exasperation at the desolating fact that Saintsbury was not Balzac. Henry James has written many pages on Balzac. Thin as they are, they are not without illumination, for a little of Balzac's greatness dawned upon him. It is George Moore who has written upon Balzac with the deepest discernment and the finest sympathy, but, unfortunately, he has given us only an essay on the short story.

For years the grammarians and minor critics—like the late Emile Faguet (fah-gay)—attacked Balzac's literary style, precisely as, in Dr. Johnson's day, it was the

thing to say that Shakespeare had a wild kind of genius, but "could not write." Balzac's style is good, because it is the only fit vehicle for his complex and multitudinous thought. It is grave and calm; it is rough and passionate; it is common and familiar; it is archaic and grotesque—as in the "Droll Stories"; it is fanciful and elaborate, for, no more than Shakespeare, did Balzac despise a bit of "fine writing." In a word, it is the man. It has never been rightly turned into English, though George Moore, in a passage or two, has shown how it might be done. The life-blood of a translation is that good prose shall not be turned into bad prose—vehement prose into dog-trot prose. More than anyone else, Balzac suffers from his translations.

Beginning to read Balzac is like setting out on a journey to a new and marvelous country. At what point shall one cross the frontier? Of course, it depends largely upon what kind of traveler you are. If you are a boy, I fancy you will want to enter the Balzac country by way of the "History of the Thirteen," with its dark, mysterious plot, its band of criminals, its detectives and adventurers. It is mighty exciting reading and once you have begun you will go on tracking these melodramatic folk through the entire "*Comédie Humaine*." It really doesn't matter by what gate a boy enters the Balzac domain. If he begins with "*Les Chouans*," with its war and heroism, he will go on, until,



In the Museum at Tours

BALZAC

From a painting by Gerard-Seguin, exhibited at the Paris Salon, 1842



MADAME HANSKA

As she looked when Balzac first met her



THE HOUSE WHERE BALZAC DIED

In the Rue Fortunée, Paris, afterwards called Balzac Street



MADAME HANSKA-BALZAC

Painted by Gigoux soon after her marriage to the man who had so faithfully loved her for sixteen years

as an older, graver man, he comes to live with Père Goriot (pare go-ree-o), this "Lear" of the business world, of "Seraphita," this vision of a world beyond.

There is one of Balzac's characters who seems to have been born merely that she might lay upon girlhood the charm of the great magician. She is Ursule Mirouet. She is—it cannot be said too often—one of the most radiantly pure characters in all fiction. When you have known her she will haunt you forever—like a white vision seen between sleeping and waking. You see her moving against a background of provincial life—all the stupidity, selfishness, greed of the little town of Nemours (ne-moor). About her are kindly old men—among them, of course, old Dr. Minoret (mee-no-ray), one of the great figures of fiction, as victorious an achievement as Cousin Pons. It is a young girl's book and therefore a book for everyone. As a picture of pure love it stands apart from Balzac's stormier books. It was the door he left open that girlhood might enter the magic domain of the "Human Comedy."

Men will take hold of Balzac by the side nearest them. For the business man there is "*César Birotteau*" to begin with—or "*Les Employés*" or "*La Maison*

Nucingen." Politics, society, adventure—there are signs up over every gateway. It does not matter which you select; the point is this—once past the gate you are in a fevered and jostling world as real as the street you live in. You have the freedom of Balzac's city.

For these Balzicians, who need no guide in the "*Comédie Humaine*" itself, there is an immense and growing literature on Balzac's life and method of work. One man gave his entire life—it was long and fruitful—to the elucidation of Balzac's career, and his books are indispensable for the student. I refer to the late Vicomte Spoelberch de Louvenjoul, the erudite Belgian, whose Balzacian collection is now in Paris. His "History of the Works of Honoré de Balzac" is at once a collection of bibliographic documents and a key to the "*Comédie Humaine*." In the "*Roman d'Amour*" (Tale of Love) he has unveiled the sentimental life of the prodigious novelist. And in a later volume, "*Autour de* (about) *Honoré de Balzac*" there is not only an account of the genesis of many of the famous novels, but, as well, a study of Balzac's plays.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

MEMOIR OF BALZAC

By Katharine P. Wormeley

HONORÉ DE BALZAC, By Ferdinand Brunetière

HONORÉ DE BALZAC By Mary F. Sandars

BALZAC By Emile Faguet

BALZAC, A STUDY By Edgar E. Saltus

BALZAC * By Frederick Lawton

* Published in England. May be found in American libraries.



In the Musée Carnavalet, Paris

THE MASTER AT REST

A pastel made by Eugène Giraud when Balzac was on his death-bed

T H E O P E N L E T T E R

The life of Balzac is a story of financial failure and bitter struggle, crowned with a supreme success. Balzac's business failure cruelly handicapped him from the start. Unlike Walter Scott, who had money and lost it after he became a celebrated author, Balzac began life as a business man and involved himself heavily in debt before he began to write. With him writing was a matter of bitter necessity. He wrote to save himself from utter wreck. His pen was a two-edged sword with which he slashed his way through an apparently impenetrable jungle of financial obligations; and the tragedy of his titanic undertaking was that, just as he began to see light clear ahead of him, and comfort and content were his, he died.

* * *

Those that have given us accounts of Balzac's early misfortunes tell us that he was a poor business man.

Just recently, however, one writer takes issue with the general view and insists that Balzac was an excellent man of business, "with a broad grasp of practical affairs and gifted with working power, energy and patience." Yet why did he not succeed in his business ventures? "Perhaps he lived fifty years too soon, or, possibly, his ill-fortune is to be explained by the simple word 'unlucky.'" Some of the great plans that he conceived were realized in modified form later by others. The world was not ready for Balzac the business man, nor for any of his golden dreams.

* * *

Whatever we may think of this point of view—and we should like to accept it—it is evident that Balzac possessed at least one of the great essential qualities of a successful business man—industry. With him industry was more

than a habit; it was an absorbing passion. Such a passion for industrious application to work has made the fortune of many a man of business. Directed to creative literary work, it made Balzac immortal.

* * *

Let those that consider writing a pastime and story-telling an easy expression of a nat-

ural gift, or an accomplishment acquired without much difficulty, study the industry and unrelenting toil of Balzac. One of our leading present-day fiction writers, whose novels sell in the hundreds of thousands, has observed: "the only way to learn to write is to *write*." Balzac wrote and re-wrote; he worked, at times, eighteen hours of the day, turning his matter over again and again. And, when his stories were in type they were only *begun*. He revised and added to his text until his printers were distracted. His work was

not finished until it withstood the assaults of his own most exacting criticism.

* * *

A misleading guide for the aspiring young writer of today is the journalistic paragrapher who points to the literary works that have been "dashed off" in a moment of inspiration—to the immortal lines of a Byron or a Moore, "composed at one sitting." A better example for all is that of Maupassant, who, under the instruction of his great teacher, Gustave Flaubert, wrote, re-wrote and destroyed many compositions before he finally found himself, and became the master story writer of modern France. The only sure way to literary achievement is that of study, self-examination, constant work, and thorough revision of work done. If one wants to learn to write, one must write, re-write and revise—and then discard much of what one writes.



DANTON'S COMIC STATUE
OF BALZAC
Supported by his famous
walking-stick

W.D. Moffat



WHEN Balzac was hoping for a glorious autumn of life he confessed that his childhood and early youth had been most unhappy. But the glorious autumn that began with his long-deferred marriage was soon chilled, first by disappointment, then by the hand of Death. Balzac's life was unhappy from beginning to end.

Honoré (o-no-ray) Balzac (he added the "de" in after years) was born in Tours (toor), France, May 16, 1799. His father, son of a peasant farmer, raised himself up to important positions in the commissariat and hospital departments of the army and married a Parisian, who, a beauty and an heiress, was possessed of a nervous, fussy temper and a severe nature. Balzac's fear of his mother was extreme. Years after he had reached manhood he told a friend he could never hear his mother's voice without trembling. She sent him out to be nursed when he was a baby and when he was only eight he was placed as a boarder in the grammar school of Vendôme (Touraine) where he remained for twelve years without any holidays. The register of the school contains the following: "No. 460. Honoré Balzac, aged eight years and five months. Has had the small-pox, without infirmities; sanguine temperament; easily excited and subject to feverishness. Entered this College on Jan. 22, 1807, left on 22 Aug. 1813."

His unhappy years in this famous school Balzac has minutely described in "Louis Lambert," which is not only an autobiography but a psychological portrait of the author's youth. The school was monastic and the discipline was like iron.

Next, Balzac passed to the College of Tours, and when his father removed to Paris in 1814 Balzac spent two years under the teachings of a private tutor who was a royalist. Balzac's father having selected law for the profession of this son, Balzac went through the regular training and then spent three years in the office of a notary and solicitor; but when he came of age he rebelled and forsook the profession. The family tried to starve him into submission by granting him a scanty allowance, but Balzac established himself in a garret in Paris and began to write. Tragedies and novels flowed from his pen under various pseudonyms and the unsuccessful author tried practical business as publisher, printer and type-

founder, incurring heavy debts which were not fully settled until 1838. Balzac's life as a printer is described in "Lost Illusions." Balzac's great confidante was his sister Laure (lore), who afterwards became Madame Surville and who wrote his biography. He had another sister and a brother, but Laure was the only one he had affection for. She seems to have absorbed all the love that the boy would naturally have given his mother had she not been so heartless. Balzac was most affectionate and his love for this sister was intense. "More than once," she tells us, "he allowed himself to be punished for my faults without betraying me. Once when I came upon the scene in time to accuse myself, he said, 'Don't acknowledge next time. I like to be punished for you.'"

In 1820 this sister married and went to live in Bayeaux (bigh-yeu). He corresponded with her all his life and confided to her his ambitions, disappointments, troubles, sentiments and friendships. Only two shadows ever darkened the great love of this brother and sister—one was the jealousy of Monsieur Surville, who placed restrictions on their intercourse; and the other was Laure's want of sympathy for Madame Hanska. She seems to have doubted that the "Polar Star" returned Balzac's passionate love and devotion.

In all this period Balzac the youth was practically serving apprenticeship to the hidden genius that was destined to arise from obscurity. The young Balzac was observing and training for the greater work of his greater self. Balzac in his garret, No. 9 Rue les Deguières (lay dub-gee-air), was the same personage as the Balzac of forty-five. He changed little because his mind ripened early and because his nature always retained its simplicity. Balzac was early a man, and something of a child to the end of his life. The experiences of his early years are marvellously told in "Louis Lambert," "The Magic Skin" ("*Peau de Chagrin*"), "The Cat and Racket," "Lost Illusions," and "César Birotteau" (bee-rot-toe).



FROM A SEPIA DRAWING BY BOULANGER, IN THE MUSEUM AT TOURS

PORTRAIT OF BALZAC
AT THE AGE OF THIRTY-FOUR



BALZAC had written thirty or forty volumes and had brought out an edition of the works of Molière (mol-yaré) and of La Fontaine before he attracted any great attention. Burdened with debt, he now began, in his garret in the street later called Les Chouans, (lay shoo-an) the first romance that he considered worthy to bear

his name. This appeared in 1829, confessedly under the influence of Walter Scott. In the same year Balzac published the analytic and satirical sketches called "*Physiologie du Mariage*." Both of these books achieved great success. Balzac's real career now began, and novel after novel and story after story appeared. Soon the idea came to Balzac of studying the period in which he lived and of classifying and preserving the types that he knew and studied so minutely. No man of letters ever lived more intensely the life of his creations than Balzac. They were real personages to him. When he was at work upon a novel, he shut himself up in his workroom with these people of his brain.

Balzac's method of writing was eccentric. When he had well covered thirty or forty pages with ideas and phrases, he would send these to the printer. The proofs were then pasted on huge sheets of paper, to which the author added a lot more writing. Balzac's proofs have been described as "resembling a geographical map with rivers, estuaries and lakes, or a complicated railway system in which the lines cross and re-cross one another in bewildering manner." Altogether, he was the despair of printers. For instance, "César Birotteau" was promised by *Figaro* (a famous French publication) for December 15th. Balzac began it on November 17th, and sent in two hundred pages scribbled in five feverish nights. "Everyone knows how he writes," said *Figaro*. "It was a chaos, an apocalypse, a Hindu poem. The time was short, no one could make head or tail of the writing; but it was transposed as nearly as possible into words. The author sent back the first two proofs pasted on enormous placards. It was frightful. From each sign, from each printed word shot a pen-stroke, gliding like a sky-rocket and bursting at the extremity into a luminous fire of phrases, epithets, words underlined, crossed and re-crossed, intermingled, erased and superposed. The appearance was simply dazzling! The office was far from gay. The type-setters beat their breasts, and presses groaned, the proof-readers tore their hair. The most intelligent of them attacked the proofs. Next day Monsieur de Balzac returned two

pages of Chinese. A generous foreman offered to blow out his brains!

"Two new sheets arrived, written in Siamese. Two workmen lost their sight, and the small command of language they possessed." "César Birotteau" appeared, however, on the date agreed upon, having been written and printed in twenty days, although the proofs were corrected by the author fifteen times!

No author was ever more absorbed in his work than Balzac. His work was practically his life and his life was his work. He had little else besides. Balzac never enjoyed home life; indeed we may say that he never had a home. Once when he tired of Paris for a time he built at Ville d'Avray a villa, "Les Jardins" (lay zhahr-dahng), which figures in some of his books. Here he dreamed fantastic schemes of raising pineapples in great quantity under glass, and had other novel ideas for making money. Indeed, Balzac was always concocting strange ways of acquiring a fortune. Some of his ideas proved practical—for those who reaped the benefit.

Balzac traveled a good deal and in the intervals between the writing of his novels he enjoyed his friends and the fascinations of Parisian life. Most of his important works were written in Paris, but three of his best, "Louis Lambert," "Lily of the Valley" and "Quest of the Absolute" were composed in Sache (sash-ay), a magnificent estate near Tours.

Balzac had three great romances in his life. All three women were above him in rank. The first was Madame de Berney, who figures in his correspondence as "Dilecta" and as Madame de Mortsauf in "Lily of the Valley," which Balzac considered his masterpiece. The next was the noble Marquise de Castries, a fashionable, shallow-hearted lady, who soon discarded him. Then came the third, the love of his life, the Countess Evelina Hanska, whom he married shortly before his death. The marriage occurred in Poland in the spring of 1850. Balzac took his bride to Paris, where he had furnished a house with artistic treasures. Here he died on August 28, 1850. Victor Hugo, who visited him in his last hours, delivered the funeral oration.



HONORÉ DE BALZAC



BALZAC had a robust physique. He was short and stout, with square shoulders, had thick black hair, full, red lips, broad, high forehead, ruddy cheeks, and a large head supported on a thick, round neck. He had very fine hands, of which he was proud, and wonderful eyes. Some people called them brown; others described

them as black diamonds full of golden gleams, lit with the fire of genius and giving forth rays of kindness from a joyous mind and generous heart.

Lamartine said: "Balzac bore his genius so simply that he did not feel it. The dominating trait of his face was communicative kindness. He charmed your mind when he spoke and when not speaking he charmed your heart. No passion of hatred, or envy, could have been expressed by this physiognomy—it would have been impossible for him not to have been kind. A gay childishness was the characteristic of this man, a soul on holiday when he laid down his pen to forget himself with his friends."

Balzac ate little meat and consumed great quantities of fruits and vegetables. He was a great companion and loved jokes, at which he burst forth with hearty laughter. His love for beautiful furniture and objects of art found expression in the home he furnished for his bride (Madame Hanska) in the Rue Fortunée. These treasures are described in "Cousin Pons."

"To be famous and to be loved" were his confessed ambitions, expressed many times. His love for the Countess Hanska was his consuming passion. In a moment of despair, just before the marriage took place in 1850, he wrote: "My heart, soul and ambition will be satisfied with nothing but the object I have pursued for sixteen years. If this immense happiness escapes me, I shall no longer want anything. I shall give up everything."

Balzac was careless in his dress and after twelve hours of work would often rush to the printer's in shabby clothes, well-worn gloves and a hat pulled over his eyes. When at work he always wore a loose dressing-gown of white flannel, or cashmere, made like the habit of a Benedictine monk and held at the waist by a silk cord. This robe was always spotlessly clean. Embroidered slippers and a Venetian chain of gold, from which hung scissors, a paper-knife and a pen-knife of exquisite workmanship, completed this costume. No matter what was the season, or temperature, heavy curtains darkened

the windows of his work-room and light was afforded by two candles always kept burning in a pair of bronze candlesticks. Balzac wrote at a modest table covered with green baize in a big arm-chair upholstered in red leather. To keep himself awake when the desire for sleep asserted itself, he drank black coffee in great quantity. One of his friends said that "he lived on 50,000 cups of coffee and died of 50,000 cups of coffee."

Notwithstanding his genius, Balzac composed laboriously. He would sometimes spend an hour revising a single sentence. When he wrote a book he lived and breathed with his characters. He became so absorbed that sometimes he would not stir out of doors for two months. Then he would suddenly appear in the boulevards of Paris much as if he had returned from a journey, and enjoy life. Suddenly he would go back again to work and be lost to the world. Sainte-Beuve said: "Balzac wrote his Human Comedy not only with his thought but with his blood and muscle." In one of his letters to Madame Hanska, Balzac told her: "I am working twenty hours a day. People talk of victims of war and epidemics, but who thinks of the battlefields of the arts, the science and literature, of the heaps of dead and dying caused by the violent struggles to success? Work, work, work! Night succeeds night of consuming work; days succeed days of meditation; execution succeeds conception; conception again follows execution! When I am not leaning over my papers by the light of the wax-candles in the room which I have described in "The Girl with the Golden Eyes" or lying down from fatigue on the divan, I am panting with pecuniary difficulties, sleeping little, eating little, seeing nobody; in short, I am like a republican general making a campaign without bread and without shoes. From time to time I rise from my chair and contemplate the sea of houses; and, after having breathed a mouthful of air, I go back to my work. To live by the pen is a labor which galley-slaves would refuse: they would prefer death."



ERECTED IN PARIS ON THE AVENUE FRIEDLAND

STATUE OF BALZAC. BY FALGUIÈRE



BALZAC'S love story is strange and pathetic. He was as great a lover as he was a literary genius. In Madame Hanska he found the woman of his dreams and he loved and waited for her for seventeen years, only to have a tragic ending to his long-deferred happiness. The history is revealed in letters written by Balzac

from 1833 to 1848 to the Polish countess who became his wife in 1850. These letters, owned by the Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, were published in 1899. The letters of Madame Hanska were destroyed.

In a lonely castle in the Ukraine, far away from Paris, in southern Russia, the Countess Evelina Rzewuska (zhe-voos-kah), twenty-six years old and married to Count Hanski, twenty-five years her senior, read with great delight Balzac's "*Scènes de la Vie Privée*." A later novel, "The Magic Skin," she found too cynical and wrote to the author in protest. She signed her letter "L'Etrangère" (The Stranger) and addressed it in care of the author's publisher. Balzac received this letter, that was to change his whole life, on February 28, 1833. He replied; and the correspondence that followed soon blossomed into romance. A few months later Madame Hanska announced that she would visit Switzerland, accompanied by her husband, her little daughter and the latter's governess. When Balzac and Madame Hanska met in Neuchâtel on the shore of the lake, Balzac saw an elegant, aristocratic and exquisitely dressed lady of distinguished breeding, with raven hair, olive complexion, red lips and lovely hands. Madame Hanska saw a thick-set, corpulent man, carelessly dressed, and with heavy chin and wonderful eyes. From that meeting Balzac belonged to Madame Hanska—heart, mind and soul! On Christmas Day they met again in Geneva, and Balzac obtained a definite promise that if the Countess ever became a widow she would marry him. After these two meetings the lovers saw each other only once in eight years, between 1834 and 1848, in Vienna.

One day in 1842 Balzac received a letter from Madame Hanska, announcing the death of Count Hanski. Balzac now thought his happiness was at hand; but the countess forbade him to see her for a year. Enormously rich and very conventional, she seems to have hesitated about sharing the life of a literary genius. When they met in Petrograd in 1843, Balzac wrote: "About midday, July 17, I had the happiness of once more seeing and paying my respects to my dear Countess Eve in her Hotel Kontarzoff. After seven years' separation, I found her young and beautiful as ever, the interval having

been spent by her amid endless wastes of cornland and by myself in that vast peopled desert called Paris. She received me as an old friend, whilst to me the long parting recalled cold, unhappy, joyless hours. Ten years have passed since we first met, and, contrary to general experience, in the sorrows of absence and the piled-up disappointment of years my feelings for her have but deepened."

The marriage, which the countess indefinitely postponed to the anxiety and distress of Balzac, at length took place on March 14, 1850, in Poland. Balzac's joy is thus expressed: "Three days ago I married the only woman I have ever loved, whom I love more than ever and whom I shall love till death. This union is, I think, the recompense which God has had in reserve for me after so much adversity, so many years of work, so much gone through and overcome. I did not have a happy youth, nor a happy spring-tide. I shall have the most brilliant of summers and the sweetest of autumns."

The lovers were both in wretched health. Madame Balzac was suffering from rheumatic gout, and Balzac was practically a dying man. After a dreadful journey of two months, over wintry roads, they reached Paris, arriving at the charmingly furnished house in the Rue Fortunée, which, according to Balzac's directions, was brilliantly lighted and filled with flowers. Then Balzac wrote in ecstasy: "Twenty-five years of work and struggle are nothing compared to a love so splendid, so radiant, so complete."

But this happiness was not to last. Within two months and a half Balzac was dead!

The woman upon whom this great lover had lavished so much heroic devotion and who had shown herself so cold and irresponsible on so many occasions remained cold and heartless to the last. When Victor Hugo went to see Balzac, he found only the nurse and Balzac's mother at his bedside; and he was told that "the doctor had given Balzac up and that Madame Balzac had retired to her rooms."

Madame Balzac survived her husband thirty-two years. She died in Paris in bankruptcy caused by her absurd expenditures; but it is to her credit that she paid all of Balzac's debts.



FROM A DRAWING BY CHARLES HJARD
COURTESY OF THE CENTURY COMPANY

THE "HOTEL OF THE MOOR"
AT ALENÇON, NORMANDY (DESCRIBED IN "THE CHOUANS")



HE "Comédie Humaine" is the panorama of an epoch. The name must not be taken literally. "The Human Comedy" is the comedy which humanity plays for each of us in turn, or together (as in political economy each of us is both producer and consumer), for we are actors and spectators in it. We are born, we live,

we toil, we love, we hate, we forgive, we avenge ourselves, we help and we hinder one another, we rebel and we submit, we laugh and we weep, we grow indignant and we are placated, we disagree, we fight, we fret, we quiet down and we die; and this is what happens in Balzac's novels." Thus a French critic happily defines the stupendous work.

The title, suggested by the "Divine Comedy" of Dante, did not occur to Balzac until 1841, although the vast scheme which he described as "a history of society depicted in action" was mapped out in 1833. Balzac was thirty-two and had published "The Country Doctor" when the idea of depicting the manners and morals and characters of his own time dawned upon his brain "like a dream," as he says. He brought out one series after another of novels and stories, constantly altering the titles of these works and transferring them from one division to another until the last details were definitely settled by him in 1845. The ninety-six novels and stories composing this gigantic literary structure were then arranged in three chief divisions: (1) Studies of Manners and Morals; (2) Philosophical Studies; (3) Analytical Studies. These are again classified under sub-divisions.

As early as 1834, Balzac wrote: "My work is to represent all social effects without anything being omitted from it, whether situation in life, physiognomy, character of man or woman, manner of living, profession, zone of social existence, region of idiosyncrasy, childhood, maturity, old age, politics, jurisdiction and war. What Buffon accomplished in zoology, Balzac purposed to accomplish with human documents. "Human documents," Balzac said, "differ according to their social surroundings." The task he set himself was to analyze and classify the various types of French character that passed under his observation, and to discover the causes of both earthly happiness and suffering, besides making the setting in which his people moved account for their moral and mental growth or deterioration. In the "*Scènes de la Vie*

Privée" (Scenes from Private Life), life is represented between the last development of childhood and the first calculations of manhood; the "*Scènes de la Vie de Province*" show the changes that take place when people are disillusioned and life becomes a matter of calculation rather than impulse. In the "*Scènes de la Vie Parisienne*," these ideas are enlarged upon and the ideas of society are exhibited; in the "*Scènes de la Vie Politique*," the masses are actors rather than individuals and thought takes the place of sentiment. "*Scènes de la Vie Militaire*" were unfinished. "*Scènes de la Vie de Campagne*" (country) are calm and peaceful and show the silence of the country after the turmoil of the city. In the "*Etudes de Mœurs*" (Studies of Customs) the moral and physical transformations of men and women are displayed, and in the "*Etudes Philosophiques*" (Philosophical Studies), Balzac demonstrated the causes of social effects.

"It was no small task," Balzac confessed, "to depict the two or three thousand figures of an epoch. I have tried also to give a notion of the different parts of our beautiful country. My work has its geography as it has its genealogy, and it has its families, its persons, places, things and facts. In short it is an epitome of life."

Balzac's mighty pen depicts vice, gloom, sordid conditions and squalor as it depicts ideal characters, beautiful scenes of nature, exquisite works of art, mystical regions of thought and glimpses of the supernatural. For critics who cannot comprehend the vastness of his range and the creator's point of view Balzac has this word to say: "They drop their eyes in false modesty before certain of my characters, who are unfortunately just as true to life as the others. Do they think that I should clothe in virgin white the two or three thousand persons who figure in the "Comédie Humaine"? I write for men, not girls. Let any one point to a single page in which religion or family life are attacked."



FROM A DRAWING BY CHARLES HUALD
COURTESY OF THE CENTURY COMPANY

THE OLD INN AT ISSOUDUN
(IN WHICH OCCUR CERTAIN VIVID SCENES IN BALZAC'S "RADOUILLEUSE")



BALZAC is one of the greatest names in literature. The whole world agrees in ranking him with Shakespeare, Moliere, Thackeray and Dickens, as a creator of characters, a painter of manners and customs, a realist, romanticist, psychologist, anatomist, and maker of brilliant epigrams.

Victor Hugo defined Balzac's work as "the issue of observation and imagination." It was, in fact, the marvelous combination of these two gifts that made Balzac so unique.

Balzac lived in a strange, interesting and bewildering period. French society, shaken to its foundation by the Revolution, had not sifted down to normal conditions in the first half of the nineteenth century. There were the survivors of the great Napoleonic Wars; the old aristocracy living in shabby mansions in the St. Germain Quarter; the rich mushroom plutocrats enjoying splendid houses in the Chaussée d'Antin; and the new court of Louis XVIII and traditions of the courts of Louis XVI and Napoleon's First Empire. Society was, therefore, extremely complex, with old and new types of persons in town and country, and old and new ideas fighting with one another.

Balzac took upon himself the task of studying this society as he found it and making his work a mirror of the people, the manners, the spirit, the occupations, the tastes, the ambitions, the successes and the failures. He exposed it in all its weakness and strength, ugliness and beauty, meanness and nobility; and his performance is so monumental in scope and so minute in detail that we are stunned when we think of the extraordinary mental energy and intellectual vigor that conceived and executed a scheme so vast and complicated. Moreover, his works teem with sound political and social maxims, felicitous illustrations and epigrams and marvellous descriptions of scenery, costumes, rooms and accessories, which, until Balzac's day, were of little importance in the opinion of novelists.

Although most of his books were written in Paris, Angoulême and Saché (near Tours), all the other towns and country places described in his stories were visited by him so that he might reproduce them with fidelity.

His characters appear and re-appear in his novels, sometimes playing a chief part and sometimes a minor art, as people do in the great tapestry of life. In the stupendous literary monument that Balzac erected with his pen, women are the key-stone. No writer ever realized more vital portraits than Eugénie Grandet (gran-day), Madame de Mortsauf and

Cousin Bette. "I do not invent human nature," Balzac said to his sister. "I observe it and I endeavor to show it as it really is." He jotted down in his notebook everything that struck him. He called his note-book "The Larder." The names for his characters he found in his daily walks, just as Dickens was wont to do.

Balzac also seemed to understand every profession, science and business and every trait of human nature. "César Birotteau" is a text book on bankruptcy; "Eugénie Grandet" exposes the character of the miser; "Séraphita" is almost a treatise on Swedenborg; "Louis Lambert" lays bare the mind and will; the "Search for the Absolute" depicts the passion of the alchemist; and so on. And in many of his novels we can see that Balzac studied all the science and new thought of his day.

Balzac has to be read as a whole to be thoroughly appreciated. Although this is a task which few but literary students willingly undertake, a course of Balzac systematically pursued will enlarge a thoughtful reader's knowledge in many directions. George Sand realized this. She wrote: "When Balzac seized upon the admirable and profound title of the 'Human Comedy,' when he made from all the parts of his work a logical and profound whole—each one of these parts (even those I had least enjoyed) acquired a new value in fitting into its place. Each of these books is, in fact, a page of one great book."

Balzac's literary life covered twenty-one years (1827-1848). All of his enormous work was of the highest order. Monsieur de Louvenjoul's list of his productions occupies fourteen pages! There are ninety-six works in the "*Comédie Humaine*"; ten volumes of early novels; six dramatic pieces, and three hundred and fourteen articles and essays.

While Balzac's fame rests chiefly on the "*Comédie Humaine*," other novels and stories command high admiration, such as the "*Contes Drolatiques*" (Droll Stories), in which Balzac endeavored to show all the transformations which the French language has undergone since the days of Rabelais (1495-1553). His "Letters to a Stranger," written to Madame Hanska, were not published until 1899.



FROM A DRAWING BY CHARLES HUARD
COURTESY OF THE CENTURY COMPANY

THE STREET IN SAUMUR FACING THE HOUSE OF GRANDET, THE MISER
(DESCRIBED BY BALZAC IN "EUGÉNIE GRANDET")



BALZAC was a business man—and a business man involved in debt. From his twenty-first to his twenty-fifth year he had lived in a garret, occupied in writing tragedies and novels, of which he himself had but a poor opinion, opposed by his family, receiving from them very little money, earning less, threatened constantly with being condemned to a mechanical occupation, a declared incapable, and devoured by a longing for greatness and the consciousness of genius. To be independent he turned speculator—first publisher, then printer, then type-founder. Everything fell short of success, and he saw final failure approaching.



After four years of anguish, he wound up his business and began to write novels, to discharge the debts which were weighing him down. It was a horrible load which he was forced to drag after him all his life. The debt, increased by interest, ever piled up. Toward the last his life, overwhelmed with fear, was endangered. In 1848 he said to Champfleury, who found him in an elegant mansion: "Nothing of all this belongs to me; these are friends who lodge me; I am their porter." Ever besieged and tormented, he performed prodigies of labor. He rose at midnight, drank some coffee, and worked a dozen hours in succession at one sketch, after which he ran to the publishers and corrected his proofs, dreaming the while of new schemes. He established two reviews, and practically edited one of them himself. Three or four times he essayed the drama. He evolved twenty speculative projects.



Wearied with bustle and misery, he would conjure in imagination some generous banker, a friend to letters, who would say to him: "Draw on my purse; pay your debts; be free. I have faith in your talent; I want to save a great man." He would then arrive at a state of exaltation, ended by believing in his dream, and saw himself the greatest man in the world, member of the Academy, deputy, minister. A moment afterward, having redescended to earth, he would rush to his writing table or to his proofreading and plunge into his work like a giant of toil. Sometimes, in the midst of a conversation, he would suddenly pause and upbraid himself. "Monster without shame, you should be making copy instead of talking!" Then he would reckon up the money he had lost during those wasted hours; so many lines at so much a line, so much from the newspaper, so much from the bookseller, so much for the printing, so much for the re-printing; the multiplied sum became enormous.



Money, everywhere money, forever money; it was the persecutor and tyrant of his life; he was its prey and slave, whether by reason of necessity or honor or imagination or hope. This master and torturer bent him to his work, chained him there, and even inspired him, pursued him in his leisure, in his reflections, in his dreams—directed his eyes, armed his hand, forged his poetry, animated his characters, and flooded all his work.

H. A. TAINÉ.

THE MENTOR

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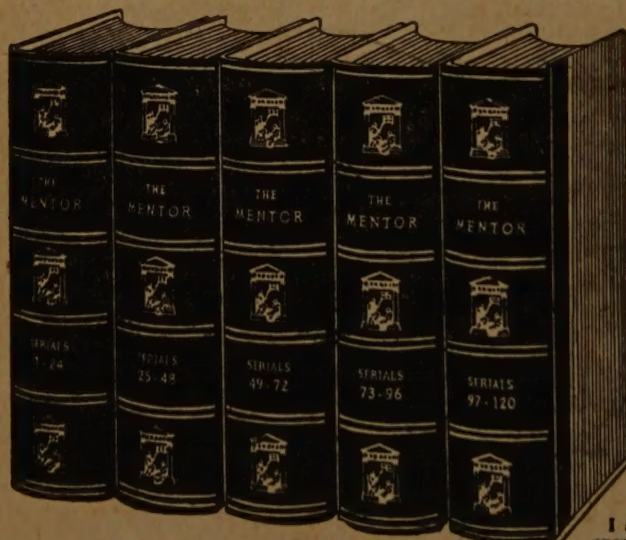
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